

NOTES IN PASSING.

By Bert.

"I do set my bow in the cloud." Gen. 9:13. These are God's words to Noah on coming out of the ark after the great flood. It was God's purpose to re-assure Noah and free his mind from apprehension of a repetition of the disaster when he should see the sky becoming overcast, and feel the raindrops fall. God's bow is always in the cloud. You do not seek for the cloud nor love the cloud; you very greatly prefer the sunshine; but all sunshine would burn you up, all sunshine makes the desert. So God sends the cloud, but with the cloud the bow of promise and mercy. We shrink from suffering and trial, we often look upon them as proofs of God's disfavor and rebel against them, yet right across the very blackest cloud shines the rainbow of promise that he will never leave us nor forsake us, that all things work together for good to them that love God, that with the temptation he will make a way of escape. Besides these trials of our faith work "patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." If you would do away with the cloud you must do without the rainbow, for the rainbow is the offspring of cloud and sunshine.

Signs are often misleading. Some places are called palaces which are only prisons. Many profess to be friends who are truly enemies. A smile on the lips does not always mean joy in the heart. Some smiles are easily rubbed off. True Christian joy cannot be feigned, it is like the oak which looks strong because it is strong, its roots run deep and because they run deep it is not bravado or pretence when the great tree shows resistance to the tempest, but sheer honest strength, magnificent and tremendous resource. The storms of life break in fury at times, but they expend themselves upon the surface and the inner light shines on. I have seen a furious storm at sea, but it never for a moment extinguished the light in the light-house, on the contrary the light shone the brighter because of the surrounding darkness. Just so with that joy of the Lord which is our strength, surface storms do not affect it.

Robert Louis Stevenson said, "To be happy is really the first step to being pious." Is it not also the last step? What is piety after all but happiness? Is there any happiness apart from piety? Or can piety exist without bringing the only real, genuine enduring happiness the human soul can know?

A man said the other day in the hearing of a friend that he would never set his foot in a church again. This was because in a certain city several ministers joined in a thing of which he did not approve. That determination of his was a sample of the unjust way men of the world treat religion. That man would not have ceased drinking whiskey if he had been told that one or two saloonmen had adulterated their wares, he would not have ceased to buy groceries because one or two grocerymen had been convicted of giving short weight, or putting sand in sugar, he would not have ceased to wear clothing because one or two clothing men had

cheated him. In each of these instances he would have gone to another establishment. Why not go to another church? Why apply a method of judgment toward churches he would use nowhere else? Why?

THE HIGHWAYS AND HEDGES.

In an address in Baltimore recently Governor Glenn, of North Carolina, made a strong plea for the vigorous prosecution of Home Mission work in our Southland.

In the mountain region extending from Maryland to Alabama he said there were five million who needed all the attention the Christian churches could give them. His description of the mountain whites, as to education, morals, and religion seems to have awakened some opposition, as not altogether just. But however it may be, that the people are not all ignorant, immoral, and irreligious, it is certainly true that these mountain sections, remote, inaccessible to influence of education, literature and religion, are fields at home which are in sore need of all that most active Christian effort can give.

The fact is that North and South, East and West, there is no section that is wholly reached by the blessings and uplifting forces of Church and school. Nearly every county has neighborhoods that are unreached by the teachings of our religion. There are slums in the cities and there are slums in the counties, where ignorance and immorality abound. The far-away mountain valleys are not more destitute than many neglected neighborhoods on the plains. It is a problem whether there is greater need for evangelization in the new sections of the West, with the rapidly gathering population and the formation of society, than there is in many Eastern communities. In the older sections of the North we read of the decline of old country churches and the incoming of people largely alien, and often wholly indifferent to religion. And in parts of the South a similar condition exists.

Yet these people are at our doors, and for them we must give account. From them strong currents of youth flow into our towns and cities. From them our existing churches must be replenished. From the strength and zeal and means of town churches there must go out the Christian help and service, gladly rendered, to save the feeble, nearly forsaken country church, and to plant the church and establish its blessed work in all the country around. It was never made more evident than it is today that every Church must be evangelistic, missionary, going into the highways and hedges, that by the love of Christ it may compel men to come in. "Is it a time for you to dwell in your ceiled houses while Jehovah's house lieth waste?"

Did not our Lord himself go not only to Jerusalem, but down to Samaria and sit at the well and teach and win the poor woman, in her ignorance and prejudice and sin, while she forgot the water pot and the water, and went back to proclaim, "I have found him."

Did he not go down to Jericho, and to the other side of the sea of Galilee, and far up into the border of Tyre and Sidon.

The highways and hedges are not far away from any of us.